

prices. And the President is talking about this glorious transition as if this is going to last forever.

I don't know about the good people of Maine, but the good people of Louisiana, they just can't afford it. And my people deserve better.

Now, what is the answer? Here is my opinion: We have got to stop spending. The Federal Reserve has got to be given a chance to do its job. The U.S. Congress has a budget that we have set for the United States of America. We need to live within our budget. Except for defense spending, we need to freeze spending. We need to freeze it and give the Federal Reserve a chance to get this inflation under control.

Thank you, Mr. President. My people deserve better. The people of America deserve better.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

SERGEANT FIRST CLASS HEATH ROBINSON PACT ACT OF 2022

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I want to thank the Senator from Maine for the recognition. I appreciate it very, very much.

I will be very brief. I ask for up to 5 minutes, which I will use less than that.

Today is a historic day. Today, the Senate has agreed to move one step forward to the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson PACT Act of 2022. I want to thank Ranking Member MORAN and Senators BOOZMAN and HEINRICH for working with me to help deliver this bipartisan solution. It is the most comprehensive toxic exposure package for our veterans that Congress has ever delivered in this country's history. Frankly, it is one that has been years in the making. Actually, it has been decades in the making.

Named after a veteran who died from exposure to a toxic burn pit, this bill will address decades of inaction and failure by the U.S. Government to do the right thing by delivering toxic-exposed veterans their long-overdue healthcare and benefits.

This bill spans generations of veterans. It expands the presumption of Agent Orange exposure for those who served in Vietnam. Yes, that is right. That is what I said. We still haven't done right by the Vietnam-era veterans, but this bill makes it right. It adds new service-connected conditions to Agent Orange, including hypertension.

This bill also expands healthcare for more than 3½ million post-9/11 combat veterans and service-connects two dozen conditions caused by burn pit exposure, from cancers to lung disease.

To pull this off, we have to give the VA the resources it needs to better serve vets. This bill does that by funding more employees to process claims, upgrading claims processing technology, authorizing innovative ways to hire and retain VA healthcare staff, and investing in VA facilities across the country.

Passing this bill in Congress and getting it to the President's desk is the only way to keep our end of the bargain to our All-Volunteer military. This cannot be overstated: Freedom is not free. There is a price to pay. We send men and women in uniform off to fight wars on our behalf. You don't have to be a veteran exposed to Agent Orange and burn pits to understand that price.

The fact is that hundreds of thousands of veterans in my State and across this country are already paying for it, and they can no longer wait. So now is the time, folks. We are going to get back from Memorial Day. We are all going to be at Memorial Day events, and we are going to be celebrating the folks who gave the ultimate sacrifice. When we come back, we need to vote and celebrate the folks who have survived but yet have the impacts of toxic exposure.

I would encourage your support for this bill when we get back the week of June 6.

I yield the floor.

NOMINATION OF MARCIA BERNICAT

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise in support of Marcia Bernicat to be the Director General of the foreign service at the U.S. Department of State. Our foreign service must have a leader that knows how to tackle the challenges of the 21st century. We need someone that understands the importance of modernizing the State Department workforce. We need someone who will prioritize diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility to reflect our Nation's wide range of backgrounds. Ambassador Bernicat is that person. She is an experienced career member of the Senior Foreign Service who has a deep understanding of the inner-workings of the Department and valuable overseas experience. She has served as Ambassador to Senegal and Guinea Bissau and as Ambassador to Bangladesh. Both times before, this body confirmed her by voice vote.

While serving as Ambassador to Bangladesh, she survived a terrorist attack on her motorcade, an experience that strengthened her resolve to keep Foreign Service Officers safe while serving abroad. She has also worked as the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Human Resources. She speaks French, Hindi, and Russian and is a recipient of the Secretary of State's Distinguished Service Award. She has a master's degree in the science in foreign service at Georgetown University and a bachelor's degree from Lafayette College. As a former Deputy Assistant Secretary working on human resources, she understands the personnel challenges facing the Department. Last but not least, Ambassador Bernicat was born in the great State of New Jersey.

In short, Ambassador Bernicat is without a doubt the right person for this position. It is unacceptable that someone as qualified as her has been languishing on the Senate floor for

more than 7 months. Her nomination comes at a critical time as the Department needs leadership that will address key issues like attrition, training, morale, and mental health. We need our best people in position to ensure we are recruiting, retaining, promoting, and training the next generation of leaders. It is long past time to confirm Ambassador Bernicat.

I enthusiastically support Ambassador Bernicat, and I respectfully urge my colleagues to join me in confirming her immediately.

VOTE ON THE BERNICAT NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Bernicat nomination?

Mr. GRASSLEY. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN).

The result was announced—yeas 82, nays 10, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 212 Ex.]

YEAS—82

Baldwin	Hagerty	Reed
Barrasso	Hassan	Risch
Bennet	Heinrich	Romney
Blumenthal	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Blunt	Hirono	Rounds
Booker	Hoeven	Rubio
Brown	Inhofe	Sasse
Burr	Johnson	Schatz
Cantwell	Kaine	Schumer
Capito	Kelly	Shaheen
Cardin	Kennedy	Sinema
Carper	King	Smith
Casey	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Cassidy	Lankford	Sullivan
Collins	Leahy	Tester
Coons	Lujan	Thune
Cornyn	Lummis	Tillis
Cortez Masto	Manchin	Toomey
Crapo	Markey	Tuberville
Daines	Marshall	Warner
Duckworth	McConnell	Warnock
Durbin	Menendez	Warren
Ernst	Moran	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murphy	Wicker
Fischer	Murray	Wyden
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Young
Graham	Padilla	
Grassley	Peters	

NAYS—10

Boozman	Hyde-Smith	Scott (SC)
Braun	Lee	Shelby
Cotton	Paul	
Hawley	Scott (FL)	

NOT VOTING—8

Blackburn	Merkley	Sanders
Cramer	Murkowski	Van Hollen
Cruz	Portman	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY).